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Peter Elman, *Frank*  
The Russian  
are Coming

## WASHINGTON CLOSE-UP

**Russians Ripe for Reappraisal**

By FRANK GETLEIN

It is proper for the popular arts to follow, not lead, public sentiment on all questions. Dickens and Harriet Beecher Stowe didn't really begin the ends, respectively, of unsanitary prisons and human slavery. They responded, at the right time, to a growing public opinion on the questions.

Hence it is that the lovely new movie, "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming," does not initiate so much as simply recognize a shift in American opinion about the Russians. They're good guys again.

The movie is about a landing party from a Soviet submarine grounded off a Cape Cod island. The 10-man detail sets out to steal a motor launch big enough to pull their sub free and in the process sets up a red alert among the islanders. Mutual suspicion and xenophobia are pierced by isolated recognitions of common humanity. World War III is narrowly averted and a new Soviet-American Friendship Epoch is inaugurated in old New England. The picture is so funny and so expertly made that it will doubtless start a good-Russian cycle even bigger than the dumb-spy one now peering out after saving the CIA from serious congressional scrutiny.

It may be doubted that anything in the cycle to come will compare with the original, but the cycle itself will both evidence and further a slowly emerging American sympathy and even liking for the Russians.

Observers as early as the mid-19th century have noted the many points of similarity

between the two peoples. In the years since that observation was first made—by Europeans distrustful of both—the two countries have done nothing but get more similar. Industrial capitalism came to Russia in the form of communism. Socialism came to the United States in the form of enlightened capitalism. Both vast countries turned outward from their self-preoccupation at the same time. Both became, somewhat to their surprise, world super-powers at the same time. And now, at the same time, both are more than a little fed up with the job.

The trouble for both is that being a super-power is not a job you can easily quit, even if you didn't apply for it in the first place. Hence both our countries will remain reluctantly resigned to maintaining some degree of order in some parts of the world, even at the risk of offense to those who prefer disorder.

Russia and America are both watching their allies grow restive and anxious to be done with alliance and get on with their private concerns. NATO and the Warsaw Pact both show signs of becoming one-nation alliances.

Viet Nam has played a large part in this shift of national alliances and antipathies. It took American attention away from Europe and therefore away from Russia. It reminded America that Red China is an awfully big country and worse in every conceivable way than Russia—more suspicious, more belligerent, more crusader-type Communist ready to count the world well lost for dialectical purity.

Viet Nam also revealed the Chinese to the Russians, and they're not any happier with the revelation than we are. Point by point, our two separate courses move toward convergence. On an increasing number of counts, the logic of world affairs moves inexorably toward a Soviet-American alliance as the cornerstone for both nations and for world peace.

The French have long maintained that Americans and Russians are equally barbarians, that is, non-French. The Chinese say the Russians are just as imperialist as the Americans. Why not accept the truth in these independent evaluations and act accordingly?

The change in foreign aid alone, after decades of being based on Soviet-American mutual distrust, will be worth all the delicacies and difficulties of negotiating the new alliance.

The new perspective thus implied in the main line of "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming" is minor compared to the really shattering identity of opposites revealed in the movie. The first thing you meet after the credit titles is a swift series of lovely views of the stern and rockbound Yankee coast. Throughout the film, there are constant momentary glimpses of the loveliness of New England shores just after Labor Day, the gullis, the lonely beaches, the surge of breaking water over rocks. You are constantly reminded that there's no place like Cape Cod.

Except for California just above San Francisco, where the movie was made.